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## Third Committee

**Summary record of the 16th meeting**
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 17 October 2008, at 10 a.m.

*Chairman:* Ms. Seanedzu (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Ghana)

## Contents

Agenda item 60: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*)

(a) Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*)

(b) Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children (*continued*)

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*In the absence of the Chairman, Ms. Seanedzu (Ghana), Vice-chairman, took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.*

**Agenda item 60: Promotion and protection of the rights of children** (*continued*) (A/63/41)

**(a) Promotion and protection of the rights of children** (*continued*) (A/63/160, A/63/203 and A/63/227)

**(b) Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children** (*continued*) (A/63/308)

1. **Ms. Nassau** (Australia), speaking also on behalf of Canada and New Zealand, stressed the need for a global partnership in protecting children from harm and encouraged all States to become party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols. She had reservations, however, concerning the omnibus draft resolution on the rights of the child and called for a more inclusive framework to promote and debate children's rights.

2. Considerable progress had been made since the special session on children but much remained to be done to create a world fit for children. Over half the children in the developing world lacked access to the basic services and protection they needed to survive and develop, while children across the world continued to suffer grave violations of their most basic rights, including sexual exploitation, particularly in conflict situations. The report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (A/63/227) indicated that progress had been made, but more must be done to address such factors as poverty, lack of livelihood, domestic violence and lack of parental role models, which made children particularly vulnerable to recruitment.

3. The monitoring and reporting mechanism mandated by Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) had proved effective; it should continue to be strengthened. Security Council resolution 1820 (2008) must be implemented in order to protect children in conflict situations from sexual violence. It was also imperative to follow up the recommendations in the report of the independent expert for the United Nations study on violence against children (A/62/209). In that context she reiterated the call for the appointment of a Special Representative of the Secretary-General on violence against children, as requested in General Assembly resolution 62/141, whose mandate should be clearly delineated from that of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict.

4. **Mr. Cherkaoui** (Morocco) firmly condemned all violations of children's rights, particularly sexual exploitation, and said that the perpetrators should not go unpunished. He therefore expressed support for the monitoring and reporting mechanism established pursuant to Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) and welcomed the report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. He underscored the need to ensure the reintegration of demobilized child soldiers and address the root causes of the recruitment of children. The Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups (the Paris Principles and Commitments), adopted at the International Conference held in Paris in February 2007, provided a valuable, comprehensive strategy to that end.

5. He welcomed the progress made in reducing child mortality worldwide and in improving vaccination rates in Africa. His Government expected to meet its target of 90-per-cent immunization by 2010. Recognizing the effect of poverty on children's rights, his Government had integrated children's issues into all development programmes. At the legislative level, the Family Code had been amended to underscore children's rights in the light of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols. The Labour Code made the minimum working age 15, 18 for dangerous occupations, and increased fines for violations. The recently amended Penal Code and Code of Criminal Procedure made 18 the age of legal responsibility and restored the specialized courts for minors, which focused on rehabilitation and reintegration.

6. The national human development initiative launched in 2005 and the national plan of action for children reflected his Government's commitment to promoting awareness of children's rights. A referral centre for child victims of violence had been established. Other measures aimed at promoting social cohesion included a national mechanism to assist orphan and abandoned children and efforts to protect children against disease and sexually transmitted infections. Child-protection offices had been established and the legal framework for the protection of children's rights had been strengthened.

7. With a view to eliminating the employment of young girls as domestics, the Government department responsible for children, the family and solidarity had concluded agreements with partner institutions aimed at preventing girls from dropping out in order to take up domestic work. Other agreements had been signed recently, aimed at strengthening women's employment opportunities through the creation of income-generating projects, particularly in rural areas.

8. A children's parliament had been established to prepare young people for life in a modern democratic society. Other initiatives involved student participation in the running of schools and the creation of human rights and citizenship clubs in secondary schools, in partnership with NGOs. Such efforts were in keeping with his Government's commitment to promoting children's rights at the national and international levels. In closing, he underscored the importance of the exemplary work done by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) on behalf of children everywhere.

9. **Ms. Rasheed** (Observer for Palestine) stressed the importance of building a world that was truly fit for children. In Palestine, however, the occupying Power continued to flagrantly violate the rights of Palestinians, including children, and to flout international human rights instruments. Disproportionate and indiscriminate violence on the part of the occupying Power since September 2000 had caused the death of many Palestinian children, in their homes, schools and hospitals and during peaceful demonstrations. The actions of the Israeli forces, often opening fire indiscriminately, showed a clear intent to kill yet their actions were given only cursory investigation at best, while prosecutions and convictions were extremely rare. Palestinian children were also victimized by illegal Israeli settlers, whose crimes likewise went unpunished. Measures must be adopted to bring Israeli forces and illegal settlers to justice and put an end to the current culture of impunity and lack of accountability.

10. Palestinian children continued to be denied an adequate standard of living, health care, education and sometimes even food, in particular in the Gaza Strip, where many lived below the poverty line. Some of the thousands of Palestinian civilians being illegally detained by Israel were children. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 700 Palestinian children had been arrested by Israeli forces in 2007, 30 of whom were held on administrative detention orders and detained without trial, and more than 5,900 Palestinian children had been arrested since September 2000. Children were subject to humiliation and abuse during arrest and at the numerous checkpoints, in the streets and during military raids by the Israeli forces.

11. The ongoing conflict had resulted in soaring levels of social and psychological trauma for Palestinian children. Everything possible must be done to bring an end to that situation. Palestinian children needed to be free and to live in a Palestinian State. They must be given hope for a better future and a chance to grow to their full potential. They had already waited too long and suffered too much.

12. **Mr. Onemola** (Nigeria) said that progress his Government had made in the area of the promotion of children's rights was an eloquent demonstration of its commitment to building a world fit for children. In addition to acceding to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, it had endorsed the African common position on children entitled "Africa Fit for Children", and had become party to a regional agreement on child trafficking. It had participated actively in the high-level plenary meeting on follow-up to the special session on children.

13. A number of steps had been taken at the national level. With a view to incorporating the provisions of the Convention into domestic law, two more states of the Federation had adopted the Child Rights Act 2003. Four states had established family courts and training was being provided to the judiciary and law enforcement authorities. Various laws had been adopted at the federal and state levels to protect children, including the Trafficking in Persons Act 2003, amended in 2005 to provide for the forfeiture of the proceeds of trafficking and to establish a victims' trust fund. A strategic plan for the implementation of a national child policy had been approved. Paediatric anti-retroviral treatment and psycho-social support were provided to children infected with HIV/AIDS and a programme for the prevention of mother-to-child transmission had been expanded. In the context of the 2007 National Plan of Action on Orphans and Vulnerable Children, a survey was being undertaken with a view to preparing a report.

14. His Government was committed to providing continuous health care from conception and to improving primary health. It continued to work with

partners, including UNICEF, to address such challenges as low birth-registration rates and high child and maternal mortality. It was also, for example, committed to stopping and reversing the spread of polio; in that context he said that the door-to-door immunization programme had brought about a significant reduction in the number of cases.

15. Urgent action was necessary to achieve the goals of the special session on children and the Millennium Development Goals. He stressed, however, that the capacity of States must be strengthened. His Government remained committed to achieving those goals in order to offer future generations of Nigerian children the opportunities denied their parents.

16. **Ms. Méndez Romero** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that children were the greatest hope of their country and their rights must be protected. Their enjoyment of those rights, however, was affected by such factors as poverty, inequality and social and economic neglect, making them vulnerable to abuse and affecting their development. She was especially concerned at the situation of children at risk, including street children.

17. Her Government's use of "social missions" projects to promote social participation and meet the needs of the people had been used to promote literacy, education, health care, food security and agricultural reform, and reduce poverty and marginalization; they had helped lower the number of street children from 9,000 in 1998 to 700 in 2008. In order to reduce that number even further, in July 2008 her Government had announced a new social-mission project to promote the rights of children in vulnerable situations, including street children, and ensure their integration into society.

18. The first phase of the project would focus on protecting the rights of children and youths separated from their families, living in the street or left to their own devices, child labourers and other children at risk. The second would focus on making such children, full participants in society with a view to promoting their development. A plan of action would be implemented in 2008-2009 and would include placements in foster homes, the construction of shelters, the opening of community-based children's centres; support for relevant social agencies; finding young people appropriate employment; and leisure and support activities. The needs of some 10,000 girls, boys and youths would thereby be served.

19. The Convention on the Rights of the Child had been adopted into law in Venezuela in 1990. The Constitution specifically protected the rights of children and guaranteed implementation of the Convention. The Framework Law for the Protection of Boys, Girls and Adolescents had been adopted in 2000 and amended in 2007. Thanks to such measures, children were no longer seen as wards but as individuals having rights and responsibilities like all human beings, as unique individuals who were growing into adulthood.

20. **Mr. Michelo** (Zambia) said that children accounted for two thirds of the Zambian population and were therefore of central importance to the country's development. Zambia continued to make progress in children's education: net attendance at primary school had increased from 57 per cent in 2004 to 76 per cent in 2006; at the secondary level, attendance had increased from 18 per cent in 2004 to 37 per cent in 2006. Zambia was also mindful that child protection and welfare were essential for protecting the rights of children. To that end, the Government was harmonizing child-protection laws to bring them into accordance with international human rights standards. he national child policy had been revised and included a component on the protection of orphans and vulnerable children. The Council for the Child would be responsible for the coordination and integration of policies and programmes relating to children.

21. One of the Government's main achievements had been to reduce the number of street children and to offer them vocational training so they could enter the labour market. Zambia had moved swiftly to protect children from abuse, exploitation and violence. It had outlawed corporal punishment and was combating trafficking in persons. It had ratified ILO Convention No. 182 on the worst forms of child labour.

22. Free primary health care was provided to pregnant mothers and children under the age of 5. Remarkable progress had been made in immunizing against the main childhood diseases. The Government was also working hard to ensure that children were provided with adequate nutrition. Lastly, HIV/AIDS continued to have a devastating impact on children, and further work was needed to prevent mother-to-

child transmission and provide antiretroviral therapy. Despite the progress achieved in all areas, Zambia would require support from the international community to promote children's rights in accordance with international agreements and targets, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

23. **Mr. Bhattarai** (Nepal) said that Nepal had made steady progress in achieving the MDGs relating to children, especially in reducing child mortality and working towards universal primary education. Nepal's interim Constitution included children's rights as a primary responsibility. Broad legislation had been enacted to safeguard children's rights and protect them against labour and trafficking. In the area of education, a National Action Plan had been implemented to provide all children with access to free and compulsory primary education of good quality by 2015. The Government had taken a range of measures to protect children's welfare, with special emphasis on minority and indigenous children living in remote areas.

24. The Government was committed to promoting and protecting the rights of children affected by armed conflict and had developed rehabilitation and reintegration programmes in consultation with relevant United Nations agencies. Nepal was party to most international human rights instruments, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child. However, in order to translate the aims of the Convention into action, the Government needed additional international assistance.

25. **Mr. Tun** (Myanmar) said that significant progress had been made in promoting and protecting the rights of children worldwide but more work needed to be done by the international community. In line with the theme "A world fit for children", Myanmar had reduced maternal and child mortality and was continuing its efforts under a five-year strategic plan for child health. In addition, the Government had carried out successful immunization campaigns to reduce child mortality. The Government had prioritized maternal health and was reducing maternal mortality, including through obstetric and antenatal care. It had undertaken a number of activities to raise awareness of HIV/AIDS and prevent mother-to-child transmission.

26. Concerted efforts had been made to increase access to primary education, raise the retention rate and improve the quality of teaching through adequate training. The Government remained fully committed to preventing the recruitment of children under the age of 18 into the armed forces and had strictly enforced the age requirement. It had taken note of the recommendations of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. His Government was making every effort to build a world fit for children and called for increased international cooperation to help it to achieve its goals.

27. **Ms. Halabi** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that her country had taken action on children's issues in accordance with the MDGs and international recommendations. The current five-year plan formulated human-development strategies and called for greater civil-society input. There had been a sharp decline in infant mortality, and maternal mortality had also been reduced. Vaccination extended to almost the entire population.

28. Over 96 per cent of Syrian children across the country now attended primary school, in equal numbers for both genders. The country was on track to achieve Millennium Development Goal 2. The minimum working and school-leaving age had been raised to 15. The Government was acting to improve standards, update curricula and expand the integration of disabled children. The national child-protection plan sought to develop infrastructure, services and legislation. Steps were also being taken to ensure awareness of children's rights in the area of education.

29. Children living under Israeli occupation were particularly vulnerable to human rights violations. In Lebanon, Israel's attack had left cluster bombs that continued to endanger children. In the Occupied Syrian Golan, children faced difficult conditions: Israeli landmines remained a threat, and Syrian books had been removed from all schools. Those responsible for crimes went unnoticed, while the relevant international agencies were not present in the region and did not have access to adequate information, despite countless United Nations resolutions.

30. In conclusion, she stressed that children's issues should be discussed without selectivity or double standards.

31. **Mr. Zhumabayev** (Kazakhstan) said that despite considerable progress, child mortality, disease, malnutrition, violence and exploitation remained at unacceptable levels. The involvement of children in armed conflicts was appalling; education should play

an important role in aiding the re-integration of child soldiers.

32. Kazakhstan was party to a number of instruments on children's rights, including both Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and ILO Convention No. 182 on the worst forms of child labour. Kazakhstan was also ready to sign the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The country had passed laws in such areas as health and family law in order to comply with those instruments. It allocated around one third of Government spending to social needs such as health care, nutrition and education.

33. In September 2007, at a conference in Astana, Kazakhstan, a declaration on family policy in the countries of the former Soviet Union had been adopted. Under a long-term strategy "Kazakhstan 2030", a programme would establish legal and social protection for children. In 2008, the country had begun action on the World Health Organization childbirth indicators. It was committed to achieving Millennium Development Goal 4 in cooperation with international agencies.

34. **Ms. Tadesse** (Ethiopia) said that her Government was harmonizing legislation to align it with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, whose key provisions were being publicized. The new Penal Code punished the crimes of child abduction, female circumcision, rape, trafficking and early marriage. The Law on the Registration of Birth had been promulgated with a view to establishing a nationwide registration system.

35. To enhance understanding of the Convention, Ethiopia had conducted a number of public-awareness and training programmes for law-enforcement agencies at all levels. A national plan of action had achieved encouraging results in promoting health care and education, in protecting against abuse, exploitation and violence, and in combating HIV/AIDS. In addition, Ethiopia had implemented an action plan for preventing the commercial exploitation of children. It had addressed the root causes of child labour and had devised a national strategy to counter the problem. A juvenile-justice office was working to improve the legal protection of children.

36. Ethiopia's health and education policies and programmes had been designed to protect children. Ethiopia was on track to meet MDG 2 and ensure universal primary education by 2015; net primary-school enrolment had increased to nearly 80 per cent. With respect to health, the Government had increased immunization coverage and had adopted a child-survival strategy with a view to reducing under-five mortality in accordance with MDG 4.

37. Despite the encouraging results achieved, much remained to be done to meet the goals of "A world fit for children" and realize the MDGs. Full cooperation of the international community and enhanced development assistance were paramount if her Government was to maintain the encouraging efforts under way to promote and protect the rights of children.

38. **Ms. Kavun** (Ukraine) said that her country considered the well-being of children to be a strategic priority. An action plan to implement the Convention had been designed to provide legislative and social protection of the younger generation. However, children continued to suffer the effects of the Chernobyl disaster and the spread of HIV/AIDS. Child trafficking and exploitation and violence against children were particularly worrying. They required concerted action at all levels to prosecute offenders, assist the victims and tackle the root causes.

39. The year 2009 would mark the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention, which had played a major role in protecting children's rights. States parties should take the opportunity to reaffirm their commitment to implementing the Convention. To that end, Ukraine proposed convening a special commemorative meeting of the General Assembly in November 2009, and urged all States that had not yet become party to the Convention and its Optional Protocols to do so. Ukraine, which would continue to work closely with the relevant United Nations agencies, stressed the importance of close cooperation between the United Nations, Governments, NGOs and civil society.

40. **Mr. Monterrey Suay** (El Salvador) said that his country had now ratified both Optional Protocols to the Convention and saw the welfare of children and young persons as key to prosperity, stability and peace. In 2006, primary-school attendance had reached nearly 90 per cent, and young persons' literacy 95 per cent; the target for both indicators was to attain 100 per cent by 2015. There was almost total gender parity in primary and secondary school, and El Salvador hoped to close the narrow gap, also by 2015. In the area of health, great advances had been made. Child and

maternal mortality had decreased markedly, and as at 2006, 98 per cent of children had been vaccinated against measles.

41. The social development of children and young persons had been promoted at the municipal level through, inter alia, a skills-for-life programme for adolescents in the east of the country; measures to establish child and adolescent units and mental-health committees; and regulations to prevent the worst forms of child labour. At the national level, a youth agency created to foster youth participation, education, prevention of violence and rehabilitation had been a total success.

42. The Government was also acting to combat human trafficking and the sexual exploitation of children: a national action plan to eradicate the worst forms of child labour focused on those goals. However, El Salvador was concerned at the deteriorating situation of children in many developing countries as a result of a wide range of factors.

43. **Ms. Medal** (Nicaragua) said that her Government was committed to promoting social justice and improving the lives of its people. The First Lady had recently inaugurated a programme to reintegrate street children into the school system and help those living in shelters to return to their families of origin or to be placed in foster homes. Specialized care was also provided to children with handicaps, and child-development centres were being set up to provide professional care for children of working mothers.

44. The unequal growth generated by the neoliberal model of development followed by previous Governments had caused poverty that led many parents to emigrate to other countries in search of better opportunities. Those countries, however, applied discriminatory policies that violated human rights. It was unacceptable that economies which promoted free markets for their own goods and services should prohibit the free movement of workers.

45. **Ms. Mballa Eyenga** (Cameroon) said that her Government was working to protect and promote the rights of children in the four major areas outlined in the document "A world fit for children". Its programmes were geared towards creating a favourable environment for children and combating poverty. Legislation to ensure the protection of children included the new Code of Penal Procedure and laws designed to protect handicapped persons, to guarantee the right to education and to combat the exploitation of children. The Ministry of Social Affairs was responsible for the protection of children, for the prevention and treatment of juvenile delinquency and for social reintegration programmes. The Ministry served as liaison with UNICEF and supervised agencies involved in child-welfare programmes. In addition, a number of structures had been established to promote better living conditions for children, particularly disabled children, orphans, socially troubled minors and street children. The court system also helped protect the rights of children.

46. In the struggle against poverty, the Government had taken measures to honour the commitments it had undertaken of the Copenhagen Summit for Social Development and to fulfil the Millennium Development Goals as well as the major areas emphasized at the special session on children. Cameroon was implementing a comprehensive programme for childhood diseases and was reinforcing the expanded programme on immunization. The Government was working to ensure the implementation of children's rights through committees to deal with specific issues, sensitization campaigns and the creation of infrastructure.

47. Despite all the Government's efforts, many of its objectives would be difficult to achieve because of the lack of resources. Her delegation appealed to Cameroon's bilateral and multilateral partners to increase assistance.

48. **Ms. Péan Mevs** (Haiti) said that her delegation supported the request made by the Committee on the Rights of the Child for financial support to enable it to work in two chambers.

49. Education had always been a difficult challenge for Haitian authorities, given the country's lack of infrastructure and of appropriate curricula for the schools. Only 50 per cent of school-age children were attending school, and only 20 per cent reached sixth grade. Girls in particular were often taken out of school at an early age. In February 2008, the Government had established a working group on education and training to draw up proposals for improving education. The Ministry of National Education was working with the Canadian International Development Agency's national sponsorship programme to help school principals improve educational programmes.

50. Despite the damage done by the recent hurricanes, the Government had focused on its social programmes, including through the nationwide distribution of school kits, the provision of partial scholarships for eligible students and a school lunch programme. Vocational-training facilities had also been established. Thanks to the support of UNICEF, the World Food Programme and other United Nations agencies, the Government had been able to implement measures to prevent epidemics, particularly among children; to set up mobile clinics, especially for the immunization campaign, and to despatch health-care and epidemiological-surveillance teams to fight malaria.

51. Children in Haiti were often exploited for domestic service, a practice that had been called the worst form of slavery in modern times. The authorities were working to eliminate that practice, and legislation was being drafted to protect the rights of children. Special emphasis was being placed on enhancing the rural environment by raising the standards of rural schools and creating new jobs. The Institute for Social Welfare and Research and several private agencies were working to promote the social and vocational reintegration of children and to guarantee their rights.

52. **Mr. Ramadan** (Lebanon) said his country was unwaveringly committed to promoting and protecting the rights of every child. His Government had identified as a priority the prevention of violence against children, and was working with civil society to develop an action plan for children. Approximately 95 per cent of the population of Lebanon, including children, had access to basic health services, but there had been little improvement since 1996 in mortality rates among infants and children under five. The national health system was dominated by the private sector and tended to promote curative rather than preventive care. There was a national reproductive health programme focusing on the provision of quality services, including emergency obstetric care, as part of primary health care. The programme included 10 centres organizing referral services, focusing on areas with insufficient provision.

53. Within Lebanon's legal system there was no discrimination against children. The gathering and analysis of data on children had been improved, as well as access to international human rights norms and standards relating to children. All children had access to free and complete primary and secondary education of high quality. Great efforts were made to protect children from acts of violence, abuse, exploitation and discrimination, and a national campaign to protect children from violence had been launched in 2006. A special committee was considering amendment of the laws on juvenile justice, including raising the age of criminal responsibility. A new residential institution had been set up for girl offenders, and there was a special police unit for questioning delinquent minors and taking statements from young victims. In addition to preventing violence in the family, in schools and in the media, efforts to protect children included replacing corporal punishment by positive non-violent forms of discipline. Lebanon looked forward to the creation of an office of Special Representative of the Secretary-General on violence against children.

54. Minimum ages were set for employment according to the risks associated with the job in question. In cooperation with ILO, Lebanon was seeking to eliminate the worst forms of child labour and to address the economic exploitation of children. A centre for child victims of sexual violence had been set up, and another to combat child labour. A proposal for a children's ombudsperson was under consideration, and the first children's parliament had been established in 1996. The participation of children in matters affecting them was now an issue on the public agenda. Two training manuals on children's rights and children's participation had been developed nationally, and workshops on children's rights had been organized for teachers and caregivers

55. Children must be protected from armed conflict, including foreign occupation, in accordance with international humanitarian law. The main risk to the lives of children in south Lebanon came from unexploded ordnance. Since the cessation of hostilities, hundreds had been killed or wounded by unexploded bombs which had landed in civilian areas. His country looked forward to a time when all children, whether in Lebanon, Palestine or Israel, could live together in peace.

56. **Mr. Hassan** (Malaysia) said investment in child-centred initiatives brought benefits for the whole community as well as for individual children. In view of the new and emerging challenges resulting from climate change and the food, energy and financial crises, the Plan of Action for "A world fit for children" might have to be updated. The report of the Secretary-General on the follow-up to the special session on

children (A/63/308) reflected progress in the four major areas, but the pace had to be quickened. He was confident that the various partners would continue to assist the developing countries in capacity-building to meet the goals set out at the special session.

57. According to UNICEF, over 1 billion children suffered from at least one form of poverty, and more than half of them lived in developing and middle-income countries. Among the consequences of chronic poverty were abuse and exploitation of children, even in the pursuit of development goals, and it should be a key priority for the international community to put an end to them. More effort must be made both at that level and nationally to address the underlying causes and the development issues involved.

58. Thanking the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict for her report (A/63/227), he asked why the report scarcely mentioned the plight of children, including Palestinian children, in the occupied territories. Their rights too must be a subject of concern for the international community.

59. His Government had formulated a long-term plan of action on children, and children had a voice in its implementation. Efforts were being made to improve the quality of life of children with special needs, through early intervention in primary health care and increased educational opportunities. Programmes for adolescents sought to inculcate moral and social values and an appreciation of their cultural heritage. To protect children from violence, exploitation and abuse, intersectoral teams had been set up at public hospitals to watch for suspected child abuse, and there was also a 24-hour hotline for reporting such cases. Partnerships had been forged between the Government and civil society, including NGOs, to promote and protect the rights of children.

60. **Ms. Park** (Republic of Korea) said that one of the most effective ways to promote and protect the rights of children was to ensure full implementation of the obligations of States parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. She therefore supported the proposal for a two-chamber system within the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

61. In spite of significant improvements in the area of children's rights, especially in wider access to education and the reduction in under-five mortality, the annual report by the Executive Director of UNICEF showed that there was still much to be done to achieve the Millennium Development Goals relating to children. Special attention should be paid to young girls at increased risk of sexual exploitation, and to children affected by armed conflicts and natural disasters. Her Government had introduced legislation and law-enforcement mechanisms to prevent sexual exploitation, and had established local centres for child victims. To meet the emerging challenge of transnational sexual exploitation, it had organized an international meeting with representatives of the United States, Canada and Mexico on the prevention of trafficking in persons. Sexual violence against children, especially girls, in situations of armed conflict was highlighted in the Paris Commitments and the Paris Principles, adopted at the Paris Conference in February 2007. It could best be combated through the implementation of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) and the use of the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict, making sexual violence a priority issue. All Member States must be diligent in investigating, prosecuting and punishing perpetrators of sexual violence against children. International efforts to end it would, she hoped, be bolstered by the forthcoming third World Congress against Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents.

62. The vulnerability of children to natural disasters had been brought into focus by the recent earthquake in China and the recent cyclone in Myanmar. A cornerstone of the efforts to rebuild was to bring back a sense of normalcy to children and invest in their future. Her Government would continue to contribute to emergency relief for children affected by those disasters. She noted with appreciation the work of international and local NGOs in promoting and protecting children's rights, and expressed her Government's commitment to working with them as well as with United Nations entities to provide a better environment for children.

63. **Ms. Barnes** (Observer for the Sovereign Military Order of Malta) said that the promotion and protection of the rights of children was fundamental to the mission of the Order of Malta. It had over 80,000 volunteers and 15,000 employees working in 120 countries to help secure for children the right to protection, education and nurture. In Bethlehem and the surrounding district, where 25 per cent of mothers and children lived in refugee camps, its Holy Family Hospital provided high-quality maternal care, delivering 60 per cent of all

babies born in the district. The Order was increasing the reach of its programmes, including those in Argentina, Mexico, Angola, South Africa and Cambodia, for the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS. According to estimates, only one third of the funding required by the end of the decade to provide a dramatically scaled-up response to the needs of children infected or affected by HIV had so far been allocated. She urged Member States and donors to act swiftly on the recommendations of the Secretary-General in that regard.

64. The Secretary-General had reported, in the follow-up to the special session on children, that because of poor progress in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, it was unlikely that the global target on reducing child hunger would be met. The Order was dedicated to achieving that target, and was operating comprehensive nutrition programmes in those regions. It had recently organized a micronutrient campaign in Darfur, distributing vitamins, minerals and medicines to tens of thousands of children, pregnant women and new mothers.

65. To help address the acute vulnerability of children in armed conflict, the Order provided food, shelter and clothing, and also helped to heal the psychological wounds of those affected and to support them in rebuilding their lives. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Order gave young victims of rape psychological care and supplies to enable them to start their own small businesses.

66. The Order attached special importance to protecting the rights of children with physical and mental disabilities. Its work with the disabled in Hungary, Poland, France, Austria, Switzerland and the United States was well known, and it also supported the disabled in developing countries such as Ecuador, with a centre for the social integration of disabled children in Quito and a school for physically disabled children in Cuenca.

67. **Ms. Shanidze** (Georgia), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the remarks of the representative of the Russian Federation at the Committee's 14th meeting reflected the line taken since the start of the conflict by Russian officials and the Russian media, according to which Georgia was responsible for provoking the war and allegedly killing over 2,000 civilians, including children. No source had been named in support of the claim that Georgian troops had killed women and children. An investigation had been carried out by Human Rights Watch and by Memorial, a Russian human rights organization, both of which rejected official claims by South Ossetia that thousands of people had been killed, and called for the publication of accurate lists of victims. Human Rights Watch had also expressed its concern about the destruction of Georgian villages in South Ossetia.

*The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.*